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A SOUTHERN OUTPOST FOR *POTENTILLA TRIDENTATA*

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IN September, 1898, the writer found *Potentilla tridentata* Ait. (*Sibbaldiopsis tridentata* Rydb.) on the summits of Wachusett and Little Wachusett Mountains in Worcester County, Massachusetts, the latter station, with an altitude of only 1560 feet, being a rather low record for it, for latitude and altitude combined; and it was so reported in RHODORA (1: 90-91) for May, 1899.

Although I had been on top of several of the higher mountains of southern New England, southern New York, New Jersey and western North Carolina in the meanwhile, I do not recall meeting this characteristic mountain plant again, outside of cultivation,¹ for more than thirty years. On Oct. 14, 1928, I climbed Blood Mountain, in the southern edge of Union County, Georgia, in latitude 34° 44', and found this species fairly common in crevices of rocks at the summit, 4463 feet above sea-level according to the topographic maps. The rock was not studied scientifically, but is highly siliceous, as on most other mountain summits in the South, of whatever geological age. As there are no higher peaks anywhere farther south in the eastern United States, it may be that this is the extreme southern limit of the species.

The trees near the summit are very stunted, on account of the cold winds and ice storms in winter, thin soil, and perhaps other

¹ On March 16, 1915, I saw it in a most unexpected place, namely, in a rock garden on a new private estate in Sebring, Florida, in latitude 27° 30' (less than 300 miles from the Tropic of Cancer). I did not visit Sebring again for several years, and by that time the town had grown so prodigiously that I could not identify the spot; and I never learned whether the *Potentilla* survived the summers there.

factors, and an acre or two at the summit is practically treeless, affording an unobstructed view in all directions.

The most intimate associate of the *Potentilla* there was *Paronychia argyrocoma*, another characteristic plant of mountain summits from Virginia to Georgia.

Other plants noted in the immediate vicinity (listing them in approximate order of size) were *Castanea dentata*, *Quercus alba*, *Robinia Pseudo-acacia*, *Amelanchier* sp., *Kalmia latifolia*, *Hamamelis Virginiana*, *Rhododendron maximum*, *Corylus* sp., *Salix humilis*, *Diervilla trifida*, *Andropogon scoparius*, *Polypodium vulgare*, *Selaginella rupestris*, a moss, *Polytrichum* sp., and a lichen, *Umbilicaria* sp. (All but one or two of these are common also in New England.) *Juncus tenuis* grew along the path, as it does in innumerable other places in the eastern United States.

It so happens that just before my visit a two-mile foot trail had been completed from the summit of Blood Mountain to Neel's Gap (3108 feet above sea-level), the nearest point on the Appalachian Scenic Highway, a new paved road (said to extend from the St. Lawrence to the Gulf), already much frequented by tourists; and other visitors than myself and companions were taking advantage of the trail on that beautiful autumn day. Worse still, it is planned to erect a stone observation tower on the summit of the mountain in the near future. The stone for it will naturally be taken from the immediate vicinity, with more or less damage to the *Potentilla* and other rock-loving plants, and the inevitable increase in number of visitors is bound to cause still further damage to the vegetation (even though the *Potentilla* offers little attraction to flower-picking vandals), and the introduction of more weeds.¹

All this is in line with a nation-wide movement in recent years to make places of scenic and scientific interest more accessible to thoughtless hordes of pleasure-seekers, to whom the scientific features mean nothing, or less than nothing. Several such places have already been made national or state parks (the spot in question, with two acres surrounding the summit, is Georgia's first state park), and when that is done many people who never gave it a thought before seem to be seized with a desire to go and trample over the landscape

¹ Since this went into type an article by Raymond H. Torrey, in *Torrey*, 29: 72, 73, emphasizes the danger of destruction of the only New Jersey station (High Point on Kittatiny Mountain) for *Potentilla tridentata* through a similar erection of a monument, without any apparent thought that in the process one of Nature's monuments is being destroyed.

or commit other depredations, and considerable damage has already been done in that way in other states, it is said.

It is a debatable question whether such interesting places would better be left to the chance of falling a prey to the exploiters of stone, timber, etc. (some of them have nothing of imaginable economic value anyway), and let scientists and nature-lovers endure a few hardships to reach them, or be made more accessible and attractive to the masses as well as to scientists, with inevitable progressive deterioration. The average person does not grasp the distinction between a state or national park, designed to preserve natural conditions, and a city park, which is purely ornamental and recreational; and the tendency is to obliterate such distinctions.¹ Even if the possibility of vandalism and other damage could be eliminated by constant patrolling, a botanist would not get much satisfaction from following a beaten path, where he knew that several others had preceded him and recorded everything worth observing.

ATHENS, GEORGIA.

ANOTHER STATION FOR *CYPRIPEDIUM ARIETINUM* IN MASSACHUSETTS.—On June 5th, 1928, Rev. Frank C. Seymour, of North Amherst and R. A. Clark of Springfield, Massachusetts, found on the western slope of Wilbraham Mt., between Wilbraham and North Wilbraham, three plants of *Cypripedium arietinum*. Two of the plants had been in flower but were past, as the flowering season is some two weeks earlier.

May 26 of this year [1929] the spot was again visited by Dr. Walter H. Chapin of Springfield and Miss Fannie A. Stebbins, retired Nature Supervisor of the Springfield Schools, in company with R. A. Clark. Again the three plants were found, two of them in fine flower. Plants and flowers were left intact. Diligent search revealed no other plants. No other record is known of this rare orchid in this region.

The writer has visited Mt. Toby in the town of Sunderland for many years in the last of May, seeing each year from 30 to 50 of these coy flowers. This year 31 blossoms were found, including one splendid colony of eight flowers.—R. A. CLARK, Springfield, Massachusetts.

¹ In this connection see Charles C. Adams, The importance of preserving wilderness conditions. (In 22nd Report of the Director) N. Y. State Mus. Bull. 279: 37-46, figs. 6-9. 1929.